Personal Review

Islamic States and the Golden Age (1200–1450)

- **The Seljuk Empire (1037):** A Turko-Persian Sunni empire from Central Asia that conquered Persia and Anatolia.
- **Battle of Manzikert (1071):** The Seljuks defeated the Byzantines and took Anatolia, which triggered the **First Crusade**.
- **Delhi Sultanate (1206–1526):** An Islamic empire in India founded by **Mamluks** (slave soldiers). They were one of the few states to successfully **repel the Mongols**, saving Indian culture from destruction.
- **Sultans vs. Caliphs:** Sultans held political power and enforced Sharia law but, unlike caliphs, lacked the authority to change religious doctrine.
- **Diasporic Communities:** Muslim merchants settled along the Indian Ocean (East Africa, SE Asia), spreading Islam through trade rather than conquest.
- **Mali Empire: Mansa Musa**'s pilgrimage to Mecca showcased West Africa's massive gold wealth to the world. **Timbuktu** became a major Islamic educational center with 150+ schools.
- **House of Wisdom:** Located in Baghdad, this center preserved Greco-Roman and Indian knowledge. Scholars like **Nasir al-Din al-Tusi** created trigonometry, and others pioneered medical treatments for measles and smallpox.

Post-Classical China (581–1279)

- **Sui Dynasty (581–618):** Reunited China and built the **Grand Canal**, linking the northern and central economies.
- **Tang Dynasty (618–907):** Introduced **Champa rice** (drought-resistant rice from Vietnam), which caused a massive population boom.
- **Song Dynasty (960–1279):** Known for the first use of **gunpowder**, the **true north compass**, and the first state-issued **paper money**. They also established the world’s first **standing navy**.

- **Neo-Confucianism:** A movement to "cleanse" Confucianism of spiritual influences from Taoism and Buddhism.
- **Examination System:** A merit-based system using rigorous tests on Confucianism to fill government positions.
- **Tribute System:** China required neighboring states (Korea, Japan) to submit and pay annual tribute to earn trade rights.

Feudalism and Global Trade

- **European Feudalism:** A decentralized system based on **fealty** (loyalty). **Serfs** (unfree laborers) worked **Common Land** for protection by lords. The **Catholic Church** held ultimate power; religious objections were capital offenses.
- **Japanese Feudalism: Shoguns** (military leaders) ruled over **Daimyo** (nobles) and **Samurai** (warriors). Unlike Europe, Japanese merchants were at the bottom of the social hierarchy.
- **The Mongol Empire (1206):** Unified by **Genghis Khan**, they used horseback archery and captured siege workers to build the largest land empire in history.
- **Pax Mongolica:** Mongol rule facilitated unprecedented trade and the spread of technology (gunpowder, paper) along the **Silk Road**.
- **Black Death:** The Mongol trade connection likely spread the plague, killing 75–200 million people (20–40% of the world population).

The Pre-Columbian Americas

- **Maya:** A collection of city-states known for step pyramids, astrology, and a sophisticated writing system.
- **Aztec Empire:** A military confederacy in **Tenochtitlan** that used **chinampas** (island farms) and collected tribute and slaves from conquered tribes.
- **Inca Empire:** A centralized Andean empire that used **quipus** (knotted strings) for record-keeping and the **Mit'a system** (mandatory state labor).

Early Modern Era: Exploration and Exchange (1450–1750)

- **Renaissance:** A "rebirth" of European knowledge fueled by rediscovered Greco-Roman and Islamic works.

- **Maritime Tech:** The **caravel** (maneuverable ship), **astrolabe** (latitude), and **portolan maps** enabled long-distance exploration.
- **The 3 G's:** Motivation for exploration: **God** (Christianity), **Gold** (riches), and **Glory** (conquest).
- **Columbian Exchange:** The global transfer of crops (**potatoes/maize** to Afro-Eurasia), animals (**horses** to the Americas), and diseases. **Smallpox** killed 90% of Native Americans upon exposure.
- **Mercantilism:** The economic theory that global wealth is fixed; states control trade to maximize gold/silver exports over imports.
- **Joint-Stock Companies:** Private investors funded voyages to share risks and profits (e.g., **British East India Company**).

The Gunpowder Empires

- **Ottoman Empire:** Sacked **Constantinople in 1453**. They used the **devshirme** (collecting Christian boys) to create the **Janissary** elite military.
- **Safavid Empire:** A Persian empire that established **Shi'a Islam** as the state religion, leading to centuries of conflict with the Sunni Ottomans.
- **Mughal Empire:** Turco-Mongol rulers of India; **Akbar the Great** promoted religious tolerance. They used **zamindars** (local governors) for tax collection.
- **Qing Dynasty:** Founded by **Manchus** who invaded China. They enforced the **queue** hairstyle on Han Chinese to demonstrate dominance.
- **Russian Empire: Ivan the Terrible** crushed the **boyars** (nobles) to centralize power. **Peter the Great** modernized Russia and moved the capital to **St. Petersburg** to create a maritime empire.

Religious and Intellectual Shifts

- **Protestant Reformation (1517): Martin Luther** challenged Catholic corruption (indulgences); his ideas spread rapidly due to the **printing press**.

- **Scientific Revolution:** A shift toward math and observation; **Copernicus** proposed a heliocentric (sun-centered) system, and **Newton** proved laws of motion and gravity.
- **Syncretism:** The blending of religions, such as **Vodun** (West African beliefs + Christianity) and **Sufism** (mystical Islam).
- **Little Ice Age:** A global cooling period (1300–1850) that slowed population growth and agricultural output.